

**Curriculum Committee
Minutes
April 25, 2005**

Members present: Ken Rousslang, Christine Smith, Beckie Bailey (student representative), Sam Armocido (Student Representative), David Lupher, Joyce Tamashiro, Grace Livingston, Suzanne Barnett, Jim Jasinski, Brad Tomhave, Bill Barry, Carrrie Washburn, Rich Anderson-Connolly (Chair), Carlo Bonura (Secretary).

The SCIS sub-committee provided this final report:

The Scholarly and Creative Inquiry Seminar Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee met on April 11, 2005 to discuss assessment materials received from faculty and the Associate Deans' Office. The assessment of the SCIS core area involved faculty conducting their own assessment of learning outcomes in their seminars, reporting their findings on a questionnaire, and most importantly discussing their findings at a dinner meeting of SCIS faculty. The subcommittee also considered for assessment purposes reports about student performance at Freshfest (the first-year seminar public presentation event held towards the end of each semester).

In general, and as especially reflected in the discussion at the dinner/meeting, this core area is in very good shape: faculty are enjoying very much teaching these courses and students seem to be meeting objectives, including developing some enthusiasm for subject area and gaining a sense of mastery over material as the learning objectives encourage. The latter has especially been reflected in Freshfest presentations.

The greatest concern of the subcommittee was the method of assessment. Members expressed some general concern about the inadequacy of the information reviewed. One subcommittee member suggested that we should ask SCIS faculty to send in their assignments. Another suggestion was that we examine a sampling of assignments and syllabi. Another possibility is to develop a generic assessment tool that all instructors in this core area use. We need in some better way to detect whether students are developing insights and some intellectual independence.

The SCIS Subcommittee has reviewed the guidelines and learning objectives for the SCIS core and makes no formal recommendation for changes to this core area, but encourages the Curriculum Committee to review its assessment mechanisms for the SCIS seminar.

Discussion of the report:

Initial discussion of the report focused on concerns by Barnett of wording that appeared to "charge" the Committee with a review of assessment for next year. It was suggested that individual faculty are expected to take initiative to assess their own courses (rather than the explicitly reviewing assessment). It was acknowledge that the Committee is in a good position to see how the seminar program is going and will be able to suggest changes if necessary. It was also suggested that assessment for WR is somewhat easier than for SCIS. General assessment compiled by the subcommittee functions as a "tip" for faculty to improve their own classes.

A brief discussion occurred citing previous attempts by the Committee to direct assessments (Science in Context was raised as an example).

The sentiment from the sub-committee was that current assessment standards are not fully adequate.

The Committee suggested the addition of one more sentence to the report that would allow the Committee to "review as appropriate assessment mechanisms for all core areas."

The Writing and Rhetoric sub-committee provided this final report:

The Writing and Rhetoric Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee met on April 11, 2005 to discuss assessment materials received from faculty and the Associate Deans Office. The assessment of the Writing and Rhetoric core area involved faculty conducting their own assessment of learning outcomes in their seminars, reporting their findings on a questionnaire, and most importantly discussing their findings at a dinner meeting of WR faculty. The Curriculum Committee WR Subcommittee has reviewed this feedback and makes no formal recommendation for changes to this core area. It does offer, however, these comments and observations for consideration for the next iteration of assessment of the WR core.

- 1) From the reports, it is clear that balancing the different components of the core area (i.e., writing, oral communication, and argumentation as well as developing the course around a theme) is a strain. It was also noted that while faculty sometimes felt they gave short shrift to all the components in the core area, students felt that the areas received ample attention.
- 2) The subcommittee notes it could benefit WR and SCIS instructors to share ideas on writing. If students take the SCIS seminar first, that will serve as a student's first course in writing so it could be valuable for WR instructors to have ideas on how to build on SCIS instruction. Conversely, second semester SCIS instructors should expect greater writing and argumentation ability in their students, who will have completed the WR seminar, so those instructors should have ideas on how to build on WR instruction.
- 3) It seems generally that students do in fact understand the purpose of this core area as they march through the course, even though at the beginning they may not fully understand its purpose.
- 4) The course seem to be taught largely in a seminar format--i.e., based largely upon discussion rather than lecture.
- 5) The subcommittee spent considerable time discussing the value of the "pro-con" reasoning guideline. There was broad consensus that the "pro-con" guideline is important because it encourages instructors to design assignments in which students actually engage in argument performance and that in any case it was probably too early in the core's life to make significant changes to the guidelines. It was suggested that in discussing the guidelines with instructors and approving these seminars that attention to "counter-argument" fell well within the spirit of the guidelines.
- 6) In accord with the Curriculum Committee as whole, the subcommittee affirmed their concern about the current transfer sections of WR.

In the discussion of the report it was stressed (in relation to item 2) that seminars fit into a "pattern" of writing across the curriculum.

The Committee accepted the report unchanged.

Discussion of the final report to the Faculty Senate:

A brief discussion emphasized the importance of including sub-committee reports in the final report as a form of record keeping in order to chart progress course of the seminars into the future.

The Committee unanimously formally endorsed the report.

The Committee also formally thanked Anderson-Connolly and Bonura for their willingness to take on the roles of Chair and Secretary, respectively. It also thanked Barry for his long term service to the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Carlo Bonura